

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Multi Species Reserve Prescribed Burn		
PROJECT LOCATION	Southwest Riverside County Multi Species Reserve 37701 Warren Rd, Winchester, CA 92596	COUNTY	Riverside
LEAD AGENCY	Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District – Natural Resources Division		
CONTACT	Joe Sherrock, Natural Resources Manager	PHONE	(951)218-4509
ADDRESS	11401 Arlington Ave. Riverside, CA 92505		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Multi-Species Reserve (Reserve) consists of approximately 14,000 acres of conserved land situated around Diamond Valley Lake and Lake Skinner in southwestern Riverside County. The Reserve is managed by Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District (Park District) for the benefit of 31 species covered under the Southwestern Riverside County MSHCP. Dominant habitat types on the Reserve consist of Riversidean sage scrub, cottonwood/willow riparian, oak woodland, grasslands, and chaparral at higher elevations.

The goal of this project is to reduce hazardous fuels and improve habitat for native species by working with CalFire to conduct prescribed burns on 92 acres of non-native grasslands on three separate burn units within the Reserve. The burns will reduce the fuel load on the landscape and mitigate the risks associated with wildfire, providing a direct benefit for the nearby communities of Hemet and Indian Oaks, as well as protect infrastructure owned by the Metropolitan Water District and the Lake Skinner and Diamond Valley Lake recreation areas. Prescribed fire is also an important land management tool the Reserve employs to control populations of non-native weeds and promote native grasses and forbs to improve the habitat for many covered species.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4§15304 Minor Alterations to Land
 - Statutory Exemption (state code section):
 - Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
 - Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
 - Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))
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REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project meets the requirements of a Class 4 Categorical Exemption “15304 Minor Alterations to Land” - “Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the conditions of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature and scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes”. The project will increase general fire safety, while creating minimal ground disturbance that will not result in significant effects on biological and archeological resources or the environment. Fuels management activities will reduce the fuel load on the landscape and will not involve the taking of threatened plant or animal species or the removal of any mature or healthy trees, resulting in an improvement to the existing designated Reserve, similar to the provided example under Section 15304(d). Furthermore, the project would also be exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the removal of non-native brush and hazardous fuels may have a significant effect on the environment.

Field review by MSR staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project, and that no significant environmental impact would occur to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Park District is kept on file at Park District’s Natural Resource Division headquarter, 11401 Arlington Ave. Riverside, CA 92505.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

Joseph Sherrock	Date
Natural Resource Manager	
Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District	